

“WE FOUGHT HARD TO BUILD THIS SCHOOL”: COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, AND
DISCOURSE IN TWO BROOKLYN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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ABSTRACT

Abbey Keener: “We Fought Hard to Build this School”: Community, Identity, and Discourse in
Two Brooklyn School Districts
(Under the direction of Kenneth (Andy) Andrews)

As neighborhoods change and public schools evolve to meet their community’s needs, redistricting is a common way of dealing with these changes. While the practice may be standard, responses to these attempts are often not. I suggest attachment to one’s neighborhood, historic racial patterns coming up against recent gentrifying patterns, and strong attachment between communities and their schools in these situations create the discursive atmosphere surrounding school redistricting.

Examining trends in discourse patterns using public comments from two Brooklyn school districts, I found patterns of conflict-driven discourse, demonstrating that rezoning proposals activate community identities. Discourse draws on the concept of ‘community’ to shore up arguments as well as situate identity and political expression. Desegregation marks an important shift to antagonistic discourse over community threat. Further study in school rezoning may reveal interesting perspectives on racial discourse, as my findings show a contentious section of threat discourse coming from minorities.

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INTRODUCTION

New York City has one of the most complicated educational systems in the United States with over 1.1 million students and more than fifteen hundred schools (O'Day, Bitter, and Gomez 2011). It also has one of the most segregated school systems in the country (Fessenden 2012; Maxwell 2014). Even while residential segregation has declined, racial isolation in schools, particularly among African-Americans, has persisted. Half of New York City's African-American and Latino students are enrolled in "intensely segregated" schools with less than 10 percent white enrollment. In order to achieve integration, almost 80 percent of students would have to move to another district (Maxwell 2014). With this level of segregation, it comes as little surprise that when attempts to combine such different schools occur, it is often controversial and sparks an outpouring of discourse from many different sides of the debate.

Communities develop strong ties to their neighborhood schools, particularly elementary schools, which are more closely tied to geography than middle or high schools. Because of the high attachment to these institutions, the debate over changing whose children are allowed access to them often creates conflict. When a rezoning scheme is introduced, school systems often receive backlash from both neighborhoods about the plan to mix schools. Affected parents and residents object for a wide variety of reasons including economic consequences of changing property values and concerns over school quality.

Two recent controversial rezoning maneuvers have occurred in New York City's Brooklyn borough. The 2012 rezoning case in the affluent, mostly white Park Slope neighborhood mainly revolved around PS 321, a highly popular elementary school that was

rezoned in an effort to cut down on overcrowding. The second case occurred in 2015 in the Dumbo neighborhood with the school district containing PS 8, an elementary school also high above capacity. District 13 began an attempt to rezone in order to shift students to the less crowded PS 307, consisting of mostly African-American students due to its proximity to a large public housing project less affected by the neighborhood's larger processes of gentrification. The debates that ensued played out prominently in both local and regional news demonstrating the strong ties between schools and communities.

Examining the last several years of stories on rezoning in the *New York Times* and local newspapers, the Park Slope and Dumbo cases stood out as two of the most discussed, but with distinctive tones. The Park Slope comments seemed to take on a more even-toned debate, while the Dumbo debate had more heightened conflict. In two-thirds of comments in the Dumbo case, a discourse of social antagonism is present where commenters illustrate an insider/outsider conflict in the rezoning debate. Often, the comments organizing identity are attached to comments regarding race and community groups such as the Farragut Houses, a public housing project comprised of mainly African-American residents. In contrast, less than half of the Park Slope comments create an insider/outsider dynamic in the rezoning debate. And even then, the conflict is more casually implied than explicitly and vehemently targeted as in the majority of the Dumbo discourse. This divergence leads to the question: do the historic racial, economic, and community patterns of these school districts shape discourse in rezoning debates? Here, I will utilize these two rezoning cases to illustrate how their economic, racial, and ethnic differences contribute to divergent perceptions of threat in school rezoning.

Schools and Communities

In everyday conversation, the term ‘community’ is often interchangeable with neighborhood. It is a versatile construct and an easy term to call on when describing group identification. The malleability of this term “points to the place-based underpinnings of the construct and how community is central to group identification.” (Collins 2010:10). However, because the concept of community is so easy to use, it is also taken-for-granted (Cohen 1985).

While the concept of community has been widely explored throughout the late twentieth century, researchers have just recently begun to develop the idea of community as a political construct useful as a means to explore social inequalities. Historically, Ferdinand Tönnies distinguished between two types of social groups, *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) (Tönnies 2001). These ideal types were popularly utilized in discussions of community through his conception of the community formed through familial power structures. This idea “laid the foundation for subsequent uncritical acceptance of the idea of community as the marginalized, nonpolitical sphere that frames more important debates about civil society, the true site of politics” (Collins 2010:9). Up until the last couple decades, conventional research has typically focused solely on regionally specific aspects of identity driven by geography (Duncan 1994). These views place community as an apolitical entity situated in a geographically specific and static state.

Despite this previous framing, current research has begun to recognize that the concept of community might perform an important function as the site of political identity and has incorporated a political dimension to cultural studies of the community (Collins 2010; Dalby and Mackenzie 1997). Collins (2010) recognized that “no longer seen as naturally occurring...communities of all sorts now constitute sites of political engagement and

contestation” (Collins 2010:7). Communities are important because people utilize the construct of community to organize their social situation and make sense of their everyday lives. In this way, they are critical to power relations and the reproduction of identities.

We often imagine schools in the context of their communities. Similar to Fine, my definition of communities begins with aggregations of people “characterized by shared place, common identity, collective culture, and social relations” (2012:160). In my case, this shared geographic space is also often tied with strong group feeling utilized for political engagement. School zones create place-based neighborhoods, clearly cutting lines between neighbors to determine who is a member of one school and who is a member of another. While these lines create clearly place-based neighborhoods, the cultural constructs of the communities created by these lines are more complex.

Schools are the institutional expression of community-based inequalities and tend to offer unequal opportunities. Each community is often historically tied to a school district or section of a larger neighborhood, although this has not always been the case. After World War I, increasing state control of the school resulted in centralized bureaucratic systems that standardized the school form, creating “a common understanding of a ‘real school’ and shift[ing] debates over who controls the school community into fights over access, inclusion, and exclusion from desirable communities” (Cobb-Roberts, Dorn, and Shircliffe 2006:7). As these structural inequalities become apparent through the media or travel between neighborhoods, people use the construct of community to make sense of their own social structure and organize their political response to their situation.

In all types of imagined communities, “people routinely feel the need to celebrate, protect, defend, and replicate their own communities and ignore, disregard, avoid, and upon

occasion, destroy those of others” (Collins 2010:11). Communities are shaped by opposition and the political dynamics of conflict that play a central role in the process of the formation and reproduction of local community identities (Dalby and Mackenzie 1997). Public planning, such as in the case of zoning schools, has a social history. People fight for and against plans just as they build and preserve them (Hayden 1997). The French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991) explored the idea of the “production of space,” arguing that space is a complex social product and the production of urban space is fundamental to social reproduction. Through the production of space or communities, strong feelings and ties that develop lay the groundwork for community identities.

As Fine discusses, in social groups, “identity is fundamentally interpersonal to the extent that it is based on groups to which the actor holds loyalty. Positive affiliations determine selves, but so do the social boundaries that separate ‘us’ from ‘them’” (2012:163). The same principle for identity holds true in school communities. Schools bring with them local meaning about who you are as a person and as a member of a community. They tell people about whom you know and often where you grew up. In the case of public schools, and especially neighborhood schools, schools carry with them a way to anchor individuals to a community. When a rezoning scheme is proposed, community histories can feel threatened because their orienting place and community boundary is being removed, maybe through elimination, reallocation to a different neighborhood, or division of the neighborhood into new zones.

The production of communities does not always result in stationary identities, especially between communities delineated by educational boundaries. Without withdrawing from the public school system, parents have to comply with these boundaries and participate in the school with which their residence aligns. While these territories can be clearly mapped, they can also be

changed. This process of shifting boundaries requires mapping which can raise political consciousness (Hayden 1997). Redrawing school boundaries could activate consciousness about which community each side of the debate believes should be ‘in’ and which should be ‘out.’

While the proper form of schools is still often debated in current education policy, political battles, particularly in a more local context, have revolved around the ideas of inclusion and exclusion. Education policy made at a local level fixates on identifying ‘our’ children versus ‘other people’s’ children when deciding who goes where (Cobb-Roberts, Dorn, and Shircliffe 2006). As policy makers continue to create school boundaries to distinguish between students inside the school community and the ‘other,’ the demographics of the neighborhood are also changing. Economic factors such as gentrification and rising housing costs have and continue to change the social balance in many urban communities such as New York, resulting in a potential threat to the insider position of a neighborhood’s historic residents.

Community Threat

Communities may oppose redistricting and school integration due to the perceived cultural threat to the community identity. Attachment and pride in neighborhood institutions could strengthen the feeling of group threat from a fear of weakening neighborhood solidarity and ties. Schools can be the reason neighborhoods have the borders they do. This sense of place that has developed around the school district creates communities with deep public attachments. Even though these communities are stratified, the schools can be a rallying point for a sense of pride when people try to fix them up as a way to build up their community. Schools are the first place children learn to interact with their communities in institutional ways and offer a touchstone for future connection to their community. Redistricting schools could be seen as a

distinct cultural threat to the community along the lines of increasing gentrification of a neighborhood. By integrating with another neighborhood, communal identity could be at stake as the new school impacts the community's existing structure.

Although "social capital derives from personal ties, group ties based on individuals together in a common place are an especially efficient means of generating resources to fulfill one's goals" (Fine 2012:164). For this reason, the social capital once gained by interaction between community members becomes disjointed. Rezoning disrupts the existing school network and requires new group ties to form in order to replace lost capital. Community ties formed in previous schools could be difficult to transfer to a new institution when resources are thin. The cost of communication and cooperation is lower in an existing school community setting. Branching out to bring in former outsiders may carry risks. This perceived threat to the school community is one of the reasons that neighborhoods may oppose rezoning, particularly when it involves economic issues or school integration. In neighborhoods where existing racial and economic disparities are already present, the potential for greater disparities to emerge may heighten the sense of threat leading to more conflict.

The principle of community can be used to organize power between insiders and outsiders. Discursive practices in policy debates can serve to highlight the similarities among members of the community to form an identity different from the others, using a specific narrative as an inclusion/exclusion tool (Bragd et al 2008). Discourse is termed "as denoting a collective, communicative practice utilizing a set of statements representing a typical way of talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment (Hall, 1997)" is widely used in education studies particularly in the context of communities (Bragd et al 2008:199). These

discursive practices within communities can highlight social inequalities and the potential sources of opposition to reorganization such as the perception of threat from outsiders.

The concept of community is tied to boundary construction, a process that communities may draw on in times of social change to negotiate boundaries and shape identities. In response to threat, political struggle and mobilization are an important part in how the community negotiates resistance. The objective of this research is to explore ways in which communities face the challenges of a disruption to their educational environment. The “rhetoric of resistance” used by communities to express their opinions about zoning changes is an essential part of identifying that which they perceive as a threat and that which is endangered (Dalby and Mackenzie 1997:101). In many cases, “the community identity is defined in terms of that which is endangered by something ‘Other’. It is often simultaneously an expression of fear and token of defiance” (Dalby and Mackenzie 1997:101). This something ‘other’ is often an aspect of ethnoracial diversity and the consequences of residential sorting. Although district lines clearly divide the boundaries between who can and cannot attend certain schools, the historical changes in these lines and the changing nature of the neighborhoods they encompass create complicated social identities. Racial and ethnic divisions remain a key feature in many neighborhoods.

Race and Threat

Race and mobilization scholars have utilized threat to explain policy change and the construction of boundaries in the context of environmental movements (Dalby and Mackenzie 1997), temperance and prohibition (Andrews and Seguin 2015), and discrimination in welfare policy (Brown 2013). However, the concept of threat has not been fully developed as a means to explain how people respond in certain ways to education policy proposals. Understanding threat

as economic and cultural challenges, I argue that discourse around group threat is activated within the context of school communities and framed based on the racial histories of the neighborhoods and the integrating consequences of redistricting.

Racial attitudes and outsider threat can also have economic applications to community discourse as property and school zones are so closely tied to its interests. Research has shown that integrating minority neighborhoods with more affluent neighborhoods can have a positive effect on the educational performance of all students (Tam and Bassett 2004; Bankston and Caldas 2015; Lewis 2013). However, if minorities and their predominance in particular schools is perceived to constitute a disadvantage in the educational system, then members of the privileged group will tend to place their children in schools that avoid the supposed liability of minority concentration, and thereby perpetuating inequality (Bankston and Caldas 2015; Caldas and Bankston 1996). In the public school system, this choice is done through housing selection, which creates stratified neighborhoods of educational advantage or disadvantage.

The white families that still participate in the public school system are often financially better equipped than minority families to invest in housing located in neighborhoods with good schools. And because schools enforce community boundaries and reproduce social structures, those neighborhoods continue to increase in economic value driving up real estate prices (Caldas and Bankston 2015; Cobb-Roberts, Dorn, and Shircliffe 2006). School exclusivity itself creates ‘snob appeal’ that drives up property costs with utility derived solely from the difficulty accessing the institution.

When schools increase the economic cost of the residential area around them, they often become more segregated which has a detrimental effect on some students. Because schooling is a social process, students learn from those they interact with, including the other students. Students

create value in their education for each other and it is a benefit for those students who do not have those advantages in their home life. With students' home and community so closely linked to their school performance and educational outcomes, racial segregation has “disturbing implications” (Caldas and Bankston 2005:1). Without a means to connect disadvantaged students to peers with more stable homes, those students will likely suffer.

Despite the fact that through the 1990s there was an increasing amount of public support for integrated schools (Bobo 2001), racial threat theories propose that whites feel increasingly threatened as the proportion of minorities in a community rises (Key 1984). Blumer (1958) examines the strong sense of emotional reaction to either real or perceived threat to a group's position. This sense of threat impacts how education policy is received by the neighborhoods it affects. Furthermore, when a policy triggers a sense of racial threat, the ensuing conflicts can activate racial stereotypes (Mendelberg 2001). These racial attitudes may prove key to how policy debates play out, creating divides between communities. Bringing a discourse analysis on school zoning into the field of community and threat will provide some insight into how communities interact with educational policymaking.

Looking at discourse as a chain of meaning and a map of the social space, identities can be identified and examined. Signifiers of identity, both collective and individual, can be identified in discourse and used to illustrate how identities relate to each other in the social space. Using signifiers of identity, “it is possible to investigate the functioning of discourses in empirical material: ...where discourses function unobtrusively side by side, and where there are open antagonisms” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:50). These open antagonisms occur when identities come into contact and groups attempt to mutually exclude each other (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Historic patterns of exclusion and division amplified by fears of displacement

would likely create antagonistic dialogue. In these two Brooklyn school districts, the historic differences in racial and economic divides may create the patterns of community identity that are then used as sites of expression in divergent discursive patterns in their debates over school zoning.

Organization and Segregation in New York City Schools

The 1940s and 1950s began a shift in modern race relations in New York City, leading to an influx of new, primarily African-American and Latino immigrants and increased ethnoracial neighborhood segregation (Pritchett 2001). Decades of white flight to private or parochial schools combined with a decline in white urban population and a highly segregated residential structure has led to the continued racial isolation problems that currently exist in the city's schools (Lewis 2013).

Census data indicates that in metropolitan areas of the United States, 62 percent of blacks and 48 percent of Latinos would need to move to another neighborhood in order to eliminate neighborhood segregation (Charles 2003; Goldsmith 2009). In New York City, this degree of racial and ethnic isolation is even higher in its schools where in order to achieve integration, almost 80 percent of students would have to move to another district (Maxwell 2014). Research has shown that high concentrations of black and Latino students in schools, but not necessarily in zip code areas, is associated with lower educational attainment for those groups of students in the long run (Goldsmith 2009). Because this segregation has persisted for so long, when opportunities for integration occur, either intentionally or as a result of another rezoning cause such as overcrowding or new school construction, school communities and their identities can come into conflict.

Required by state law to oversee policy for elementary and middle schools for each of the thirty-two districts in New York City, Community Education Councils (CECs) are the primary organization around which zoning debates revolve. In 2003, education reform eliminated community school boards in favor of CECs to promote parent rather than community influence over the school districts. Now, CEC members must be parents in that district rather than any community member. A central responsibility of the CEC is to hold hearings and planning meetings. They are also in charge of approving school zoning lines (O'Day, Bitter, and Gomez 2011). As the transition of power from community boards to parent-run councils demonstrates, there is often disagreement over who represents the authentic voice of the school communities.

As Caldas and Bankston (2015) suggest, parental and community involvement play important roles in education. Fostering strong school performance should not be done by disrupting the ties between schools, families, and communities. Even within districts, different zones can carry with them specific geographic, racial, and social class issues. Due to the high degree of segregation present in New York City schools, these intra-district differences can be just as important as the differences between districts particularly when it comes to the consequences of how zoning lines are drawn. Two school districts in the Brooklyn borough of New York City demonstrate how the rezoning debates that occur within districts can be shaped by racial and ethnic patterns.

Case Studies: Rezoning Debates in Two New York City School Districts

Utilizing two recent cases of rezoning in Brooklyn, New York, I examine how the perception of threat to the neighborhood school impacts community discourse on rezoning proposals. Examining the zoning issue from multiple angles, such as how racial and ethnic

framing is incorporated into the conceptualization of the ‘other’ and schools as an economic resources, I assess the underlying rhetoric on how community identities shape conflict in school zoning debates and ultimately local education policies.

CEC 13 and CEC 15, two school districts in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, provide strong examples of how rezoning debates can evolve based on their communities’ identities. I have chosen two districts, one in the Park Slope neighborhood and one in the Dumbo neighborhood, each containing several elementary schools that faced a threat of rezoning after a proposed zoning change. Rezoning in New York City as a whole typically occurs less than a dozen times in a year, with the 2015-2016 school year seeing a total of eleven cases of successful rezoning initiatives (NYC Department of Education 2016). Within these cases, only four took place in the Brooklyn borough.

With only a small number of rezoning proposals succeeding each year, these two districts stood out due to the level of coverage they received. While it is difficult to say with certainty the total amount of coverage my cases received in comparison to other cases over the past year, the Google News search results for each zone planning change suggest that these cases are some of the extraordinary ones that gained media and public attention. While the other ten rezoning cases (excluding CEC 13) in the last year only had a handful of news results, if any at all, the rezoning of CEC 13 and CEC 15 during its 2012 debate brought up dozens of news articles, blog entries, and online forums discussing the rezoning proposal. While these two cases appear to stand out as atypical for their level of media coverage, they are also atypical in the extent to which the rezoning impacts the neighborhood. These two zoning changes significantly alter the composition of the school zones in communities where residents have existing high attachment to their neighborhood school. Because these districts have available media attention, created

public discourse, are geographically proximate, and provide a contrast to one another with one rezoning proposal creating a racial shift in school composition and one without such a shift, the discourse generated within these debates illustrates how rezoning debates are framed differently along racial, economic, and community identity lines in these neighborhoods.

Beginning by concentrating on secondhand news sources to capture the sentiment of different sides of the rezoning debates in these two districts, I identified these districts as two of the most debated recent zoning changes by searching the *New York Times* archives for stories on local redistricting debates within the last five years. I have particularly drawn from news sources including the *New York Times*, local public radio station WNYC, and online local news organization DNA info, as a result of their extensive coverage of these rezoning debates and historic coverage of the neighborhoods. Each of these two cases spans several months from the time the rezoning proposal was introduced to its passage. For the Park Slope case, its time frame runs from October through November 2012. The timeline for the Dumbo case runs a little longer due to the increased debate over its passage with a timeframe of September 2015 though passage in January 2016.

I have coded and analyzed 99 public comments (47 from District 13 and 52 from District 15) in order to determine the overall pattern of public discourse in these debates and go beyond the rhetoric that most frequently appear in the news sources. In addition to the news coverage, I utilize comments from each district's Community Education Council (CEC) meetings, online submissions to the Councils, and school demographic and resource data from the NYC Department of Education (DoE). Most of the discourse comes from parents (90 percent), especially those who live in the areas that will force them into another school than they anticipated. Other comments come from some council members who gave their thoughts on the

rezoning scheme before the vote took place. For public discourse, each council keeps records of CEC meetings and public forums where they have invited members of the school and community to express their opinions about the rezoning proposals. Meetings typically occur once a month but special sessions are convened for high-interest topics such as rezoning. For the Park Slope case, there were five public meetings with the rezoning plan on the agenda between its introduction and passage vote, and the Dumbo case had six such meetings. Each meeting lasted between one and two hours and contained a section of public commentary where anyone in the audience who signed up at the beginning of the meeting could express their opinion to the council. Information on these meetings was posted online and accessible to the public.

The vast majority of the comments around the zoning change occurred during the last month of the zoning debate period. In addition to comments from these two key meetings, I also coded comments submitted online to the councils (see Appendix C for coding scheme). Unless otherwise noted, comments on the Park Slope rezoning debate come from comments submitted to the CEC 15 board. I explored how different groups of people (commenters often identify themselves when making comments at the meetings as parents of particular schools or residents of certain areas) discussed the rezoning scheme. In mapping these comments, I assessed chains of meaning to identify patterns of discourse. Chains of meaning include references to social spaces including geographic areas, combined with master signifiers to organize identity (for example, ‘parent’). Identifying these key signifiers in the rezoning comments allowed me to being to show “how discourses, identity and the social space respectively are organised discursively...by investigating how the key signifiers are combined with other signs” to form meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 50). ‘Racial antagonism’ becomes racial antagonism

through a chain of meaning with signifiers such as ‘Farragut houses,’ ‘takeover,’ and ‘Dumbo parents.’

In coding, I examined signs of boundary work that allowed commenters to draw lines between insiders and outsiders, including mentions of specific neighborhoods or groups and the use of stark ‘us’ versus ‘them’ rhetoric. For example ‘our kids’ versus ‘free riders’ and ‘our community’ versus ‘the Farragut parents.’ I argue that these signifiers for diversity, school quality, and property value are often drawn upon through the lens of community to shore up arguments for or against rezoning. By utilizing the span of these news and council resources, I began to gain an understanding of how school communities reacted to zoning policy and formed divergent rhetorics of resistance.

Analysis: Narratives of Economy vs. Quality

Based on my preliminary exploration of the debates within the context of newspaper coverage, I began to see that there are different ways threat is being utilized in each zoning case as a way of expressing concern for the rezoning proposals. In both districts, it is clear that rezoning proposals activated community identities. Both sets of discourse utilize ‘community’ to shore up their arguments, as a site of identification and political expression, as well as initiate insider/outsider dynamic. However, the discourse in CEC 13 proved to be more contentious and divisive with an antagonistic mood in 32 percent of the discourse (compared to 23 percent in CEC 15). In this case, a shift in racial composition is taking place with the rezoning. Themes of having opportunity and advantage taken away and a focus on issues of school quality are present in the statements of both minority groups and the white residents who recently moved into the neighborhood through a recent wave of gentrification. In two-thirds of the comments in the Dumbo case, a discourse of high social antagonism is present where commenters illustrate an

insider/outsider conflict present in the rezoning debate. Often, the comments organizing identity are attached to comments regarding race and community groups such as Farragut Houses, a public housing project comprised of mainly African-American residents.

In contrast, less than half of the Park Slope comments create an insider/outsider dynamic in the rezoning debate. And even then, the conflict had very low vehemence. When it was referred to, the dynamic was brought up as more of a small side issue rather than a point of severe contention as in much of the Dumbo discourse. Less an issue of ‘we don’t want them in our school,’ but ‘we want to stay in our school because it is a part of our community and the free riders who do not live here are not a part of our community.’ Additionally, the outsider identity in the Park Slope discourse was applied to so-called ‘free-riders’ who briefly moved into the neighborhood to gain access to the school then moved away. The discourse focuses on these people who current residents feel exploited a loophole in the system and are not legitimate members of their neighborhood. The commentary stems from a desire to close the loophole and prevent non-neighborhood residents from accessing a community resource.

The discourse in CEC 15, while still drawing upon community identity and threat, steered away from any issues of school quality concerns and focused on the economic impact of rezoning. The discourse in Park Slope discussed school quality almost half as often as in the Dumbo comments while discourse on the economic impact of rezoning occurred twelve times as often. By exploring how groups debate the rezoning proposal in the context of neighborhood histories, I argue that neighborhood stability is central to how these different conceptions of threat impact community discourse.

CEC 13: Dumbo (PS 8 & PS 307)

At the beginning of the final meeting to vote for rezoning, council member Ed Brown stated, “I don’t think, if I can remember — and I’ve been in this district forever — there’s ever been an issue this publicized ... I’m having rezoning nightmares at night ... I’m about to rezone my bathroom.” (Wilson 2016) The recent rezoning debate over PS 8 and PS 307 brought out very strong opinions by heightening the sense of community identities and creating a debate about who should be allowed access to each school. PS 8 Robert Fulton, a currently overcrowded elementary school in the Dumbo neighborhood in District 13, has a history of school and community conflict as a result of shifting neighborhood demographics. A little over a decade ago, PS 8 was considered to be an underperforming school with low test scores similar to the current situation at another neighborhood school, PS 307. The section of the neighborhood serving PS 8 had yet to undergo a transition to its currently gentrified state, and for some time, Dumbo (named for its location Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) “was a decaying industrial district with relatively few families” (Taylor 2015).

PS 8 was also previously a magnet school, as PS 307 is now, with some of its students being brought in from other areas of the city. Parent and community organizations put a great deal of effort into building the school up and eventually, school performance began going up and the demographic composition of the school started to shift toward its currently majority-white student body (Khan 2015). As the neighborhood composition changed and its population increased, it started drawing primarily from students in its local area and began enrolling more white students. The current demographics of PS 8 and PS 307 show a contrast in white/black enrollment between the schools with PS 307 enrolling only 7 percent white students while PS 8 has a white enrollment of 66 percent.

TABLE 1: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS (2014-2015)

	PS 307 Daniel Hale Williams	PS 8 Robert Fulton
Address	37 Hicks Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11201	209 York Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201
Website	www.ps307.com	https://ps8brooklyn.org/
Grades Served	PK,0K,01,02,03,04,05,SE	0K,01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08, SE
School Type	Elementary	K-8
Enrollment	413	880
Student Demographics	Asian: 3% Black: 60% Hispanic: 28% White: 7% American Indian: 1%	Asian: 6% Black: 15% Hispanic: 12% White: 66% American Indian: 1%
English Language Learners	3%	3%
Students with Special Needs	34%	15%
Student Attendance	91%	96%
Students Chronically Absent	32%	8%
Admissions Methods	Zoned	Limited Unscreened* Zoned

Source: NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot

**Limited unscreened indicates admission to the middle school grades (5-8) is given priority to continuing 5th graders and students residing in the elementary zone, but a small number of additional spots are allocated through a lottery*

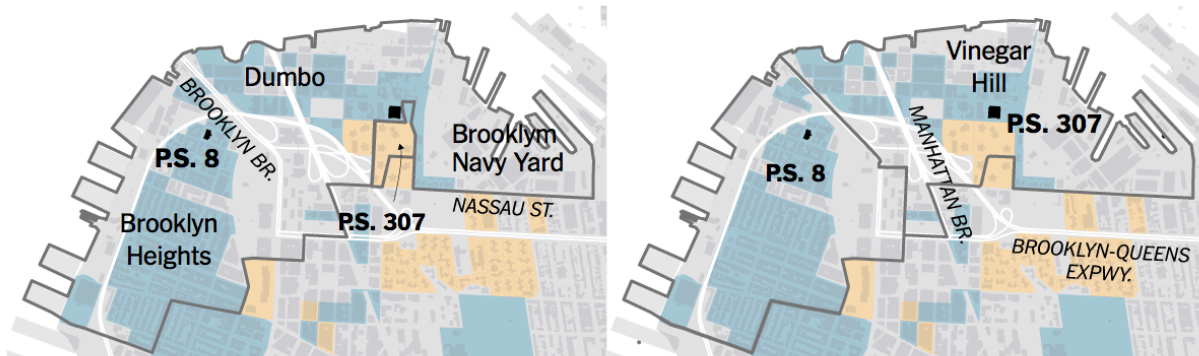
PS 307 is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) magnet school, meaning they received a federal magnet grant to emphasize STEM education in their curriculum. The school has used this money to add classes and purchase new technology for students to use. This magnet grant also means that a portion of enrollment applications will be open to students outside of the zoned area, however, as an elementary school it will still be prominently zoned students in the immediate community. Although the decision to rezone these two schools is a response to overcrowding at the popular PS 8, this district has become an example of the complications of integrating some of the city's segregated schools. As Figure 1 shows, the new school zones alter the demographic make-up of the two schools as majority-white blocks of the

neighborhood are absorbed into the now predominately black and Hispanic section currently occupied by PS 307.

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED REZONING MAP OF PS 8 AND PS 307

Percentage of population that is black or Hispanic, by block ■ Less than 20% ■ More than 80%

Current attendance zones Proposed zones



Sources: New York City Department of Education; Census
By The New York Times

Source: Taylor 2015

Because residents of Farragut Houses, a public housing complex, are a central part of PS 307's current student base, the concern with integrating the populations of the two schools is a fear that they will be pushed out of the school they have put effort into building up. The fear of outsider threat that drove them to participate in this debate is demonstrated in comments such as these:

"No problem working with anybody, but I'm not going to let anybody take from my daughter." – PS 307 parent (Taylor 2015)

"We fought hard to build this school. And we're not just going to let people come from outside when we worked so hard and dedicated ourselves ... Our blood sweat and tears are here." (Whitford 2015)

While this pattern of discourse follows the same line of reasoning as community threat theories where communities feel the need to protect and defend their group identity, this line of discourse

among minorities is not expected based on much of the theoretical set-up in threat literature which focuses on the perspective of white majority communities. This pattern is an important one that appears to be largely overlooked. In the case of gentrification, racial minority communities are the groups with insider status threatened by changing neighborhood patterns and shifting racial dynamics so it follows that an antagonistic discourse would emerge as they seek to retain their insider status and prevent shifting neighborhood demographics from taking away the school community they built.

School communities have the ability to divide as well as unite, push people out as well as draw people in. Just as with PS 8 in the past, the fear from parents and community members in the current PS 307 zone is that they will become the unwanted ‘other’ and driven out of their school and their community. At a meeting to discuss the planned proposal, a PTA member at PS 307 stated:

“What we have seen from history, from other states and even just up at PS 8, that once that progressive movement moves into our school, there’s a push out of parents and students.” – Ben Greene, co-leads the PS 307 PTA (Khan 2015)

This sentiment reflects the admittedly historically sound fears that increasing the marginal utility of a school could result in a rise in property values, making their current community out of reach in the educational marketplace. Because this area has a history of racial change, the current gentrification appears to be activating community fears that the new school zones will force out minority communities to make room for the new residents.

Racial and diversity issues came up repeatedly in comments during the rezoning debate, although they often tended to be veiled references. Of the forty-seven comments given during the CEC 15 zoning debate, 34 percent directly brought up explicit terms of racial diversity. However, often when community themes and insider/outsider dichotomies were brought up, they

used terms like the “Farragut parents” in reference to the majority-black public housing complex. One PS 307 parent supportive of the new zoning plan recognized the roundabout manner people were using to discuss racial issues commented, “I think we’re talking about things, we’re dancing around. [My son] is the only white child in his class. And that makes me feel like, ‘how are we going to integrate in a world where I would expect more white children in his class?’” (Brooklyn Heights Blog 2015). Another parent addressed the boundary formation between Dumbo kids and Farragut kids stating, “[307 is a school that] black and brown people built... We feel disrespected. We have our second graders learning to play violin, we have a health and wellness program. But you just look at the outward appearance. You see the Farragut houses [public housing project].” (Wilson 2016). Many PS 307 parents echoed the concerns of integrating the schools and incorporating an outside community into their own. They felt PS 8 parents did not want to be a part of their school and were hesitant to allow change by those who were not invested in their success. While the parents in the current PS 307 school zone view their school community as a success, outsider parents point to test scores and claim the school is not of sufficient quality.

However, despite the backlash and residents from old zones’ fear of being pushed out of their communities, there does seem to be some acknowledged potential for student and school improvement just by integrating the two schools. One parent stated:

“The rezoning will mean that parents with lots of disposable income will get involved in 307’s PTA, and politically connected parents will put pressure on the DoE to make sure PS 307 gets its share of education funding. It will be a win-win for all parents and kids involved, whatever their race.” (Brooklyn Heights Blog 2015)

As Table 2 illustrates, current test scores show that there is a wide gap between PS 8 and PS 307 with a 51-point gap in the percentage of students meeting state English standards and a near 40-point gap in the percentage of math proficient students.

TABLE 2: SCHOOL TEST SCORE PERFORMANCE (2014-2015): PERCENTAGE THAT MET STATE STANDARDS

	PS 307 Daniel Hale Williams	PS 8 Robert Fulton
English	11%	62%
Math	21%	60%
English (City)	30%	30%
Math (City)	39%	35%

Source: NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot

Council member Debra Stuart recognized the problems that have occurred in schools because of the neighborhood’s historical segregation and encouraged those present at the meeting to recognize the benefits that could come from embracing the changing neighborhood composition and using it to improve the schools. She argued:

“Schools have been systematically segregated into areas of people of color, and that hasn’t been a problem [until now] ... I am tired of better things being brought into the community and the community being denied those better things.” (Wilson 2016)

This test score gap is a key point that many parents in the PS 8 district express concern about. While some parents from PS 307 are vocal about the successes they have built in their school and the quality of the education their children receive, new PS 8 zone parents are reluctant to look past test scores for signs of school quality. One PS 8 zone parent expressed his frustration with the “problems” at PS 307, stating:

“I don’t want to be the bad guy in the room, but no one else wants to talk about it. How does sending all Dumbo and Vinegar Hill children to the school solve PS 307’s problems?” – P.S. 8 zoned parent (Taylor 2015)

Despite insistence from school officials that PS 307's problems are being greatly exaggerated and the school has a "wonderful learning community", this parent's concerns reflect a broader opinion from newly zoned parents that PS 307 is severely underperforming. (Taylor 2015). The main conflict parents express in this rezoning proposal is that these parents from PS 8 do not want their children to go to an underperforming school while the PS 307 parents worry that an influx of wealthy white parents will change their school. Almost 30 percent of the comments expressed concerns about test scores and school ratings as a reason to reject the rezoning proposal.

However, alongside the rhetoric of test scores, there runs concern about racial integration. Some Dumbo parents in public meetings worried that their children would become racial minorities in their new school while the underlying concern for PS 307 parents is that by allowing their school to become more white, they will open themselves up to community threat. PS 307 community members perceive this threat to mean that they will be pushed out of the neighborhood by rising housing costs and forced to move to more affordable areas with lower-quality schools. While the severe overcrowding at PS 8 means that the school zones will have to be addressed to resolve overcrowding somehow, due to neighborhood composition, and the importance of geography for elementary schools, at least for the present time, addressing overcrowding is going to unintentionally become an experiment in school integration in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.

Gentrification's process of increasing neighborhood instability and inequality, in combination with the additional disruptive threat of school integration, in this case appears to have activated strong feelings of community threat and shaped the discourse of debate around school quality concerns. As each side rallies around their community identity, they form a

discursive community, feeding off of each other to identify the enemies without. Many of the people who commented and drew on their community view their neighborhood school as a shared way of life – a place they could rally around. As the basis for the schools was threatened, the communities aligned with them were threatened leading to the conversion of the school into a site of political contestation. During the debate, one parent, in support of the zoning proposal, spoke and said, “I think as parents in this community it is our responsibility to teach inclusion and acceptance and to be one community.” (Brooklyn Heights Blog 2015). Ultimately, the council felt the same and passed the proposal to rezone the schools.

CEC 15: Park Slope (PS 321, PS 118, & PS 39)

While the neighborhoods served by PS 8 and PS 307 have experienced significant racial and ethnic changes over the last several years, the Park Slope neighborhood in Brooklyn has been more stable in its racial composition over the last several decades. Between 2000 and 2010, the Dumbo area saw a 55.3 percent change in the white population and an 18.9 percent decline in black population as well as 11.6 percent decline in Hispanic population (see Appendix D). In the same time frame, the Park Slope-Gowanus area went from a 56.7 percent white population to 67.3 percent. While this data suggests there was some change in the neighborhood, looking closer at a map examining racial patterns by block, most of this change occurred in the western Gowanus area outside of the range of these school zones (see Appendix E).

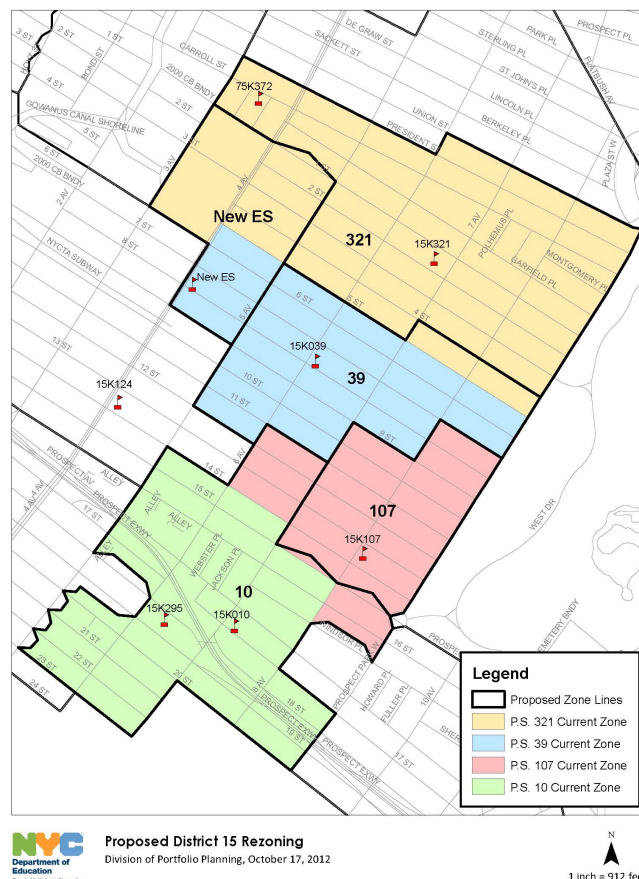
In contrast to the rezoning debate over PS 8 and PS 307, which invoked issues of school quality in addition to neighborhood identity, the rezoning debate of a popular elementary school in Park Slope brought up themes of economic value and educational continuity in conjunction with school community.

“Switching schools disrupts education. We think all students deserve continuity.”
– Parent of PS 321 student (Harris 2012)

An “abrupt proposal to break up the historic identities” of the schools – excerpt of a letter from Assemblywoman Joan Millman and Assemblyman James F. Brennan (Albrecht Nov 2012)

These statements are examples of how rezoning can be perceived as a threat to community identities. Park Slope has been a middle-class haven since the 1990s after an increase in high-quality schools and surging real estate prices from gentrification. Before the rezoning that occurred for the 2013-2014 school year, the northern section of Park Slope was primarily served by two elementary schools, PS 321 William Penn and PS 39 Henry Bristow.

FIGURE 2: PROPOSED (AND APPROVED) REZONING OF DISTRICT 15



Source: NYC Department of Education

As Figure 2 shows, the new elementary school, afterward named PS 118 The Maurice Sendak Community School, spans across both former PS 39 and PS 321 districts, removing around 10 blocks to create its own district. Initial reactions from community members and parents expressed concern that this proposal would cut out much of the diversity in the original schools. Historically, the closer to Prospect Park (on the right-side section of the map), the more expensive the housing and the greater proportion of white residents than there are closer to the canal on the top left corner of the map. Some of the comments from the parents stated:

“The new zoning of 321 appears to flagrantly cut out the most diverse areas of the former zone and institutionalize a kind of economic segregation in the neighborhood in a way that seems very short sided.”

“[We are] losing a potential source of diversity. Many older residents of the block attended the school when it was St Thomas Aquinas, and that fact still bonds them (and the rest of us) together today. Do we really want to send a message that “this school is for the rich kids of Park Slope – even though it’s right on your corner.”

“My husband and I have recently purchased a home in Park Slope because of the excellent academic results as well as diversity of PS 321. To find out that the rezoning plan has not only cut my Asian daughter out of attending, a year before she is to, but also almost all the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of that school.”

While these fears clearly existed (15 percent of my sample of fifty-two rezoning comments expressed concerns about declining diversity in the original zones), results of this rezoning indicate that there may have only been minor demographic changes with the new zoning scheme. While parents raised concerns over diversity, the discourse was not as contentious of an issue. Mainly comments on diversity expressed a concern that they would like to preserve diversity in the schools because it is beneficial; therefore, because the discourse focused on preserving diversity rather than a preserving mutual exclusion, racially antagonistic discourse in these comments did not occur. While the rezoning potentially reduced the minority populations in the

current PS 321 and PS 39 by a small amount, those few fears over eliminating ethnic diversity do not appear to have transpired.

Table 3 shows the demographic profiles of PS 321 and PS 39 before the rezoning and Table 4 contains the demographics after the new PS 118 was established. The small change between student racial profiles before and after the change indicates there may have been some segregating effects by splitting these sections of the neighborhood off. The following tables show there was an about 6 percent decrease in the number of black and Latino students at PS 321 and 10 percent decrease at PS 39.

TABLE 3: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES BEFORE REZONING (2011-2012)

	PS 321 William Penn	PS 39 Henry Bristow
Address	180 7 th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215	417 6 th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215
Website	https://ps321.org	http://www.ps39.org
Grades Served	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, SE	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, PK, SE
School Type	Elementary	Elementary
Enrollment	1436	344
Student Demographics	18.6% Black/Hispanic	28.2% Black/Hispanic
English Language Learners	1.3%	4.4%
Students with Special Needs	12.7%	18.3%

Source: NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot

TABLE 4: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES AFTER REZONING (2014-2015)

	PS 321 William Penn	PS 39 Henry Bristow	PS 118 Maurice Sendak Community School
Address	417 6 th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215	180 7 th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215	211 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215
Grades Served	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, PK, SE	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, SE	Pre-k, K, 01, 02
School Type	Elementary	Elementary	Elementary
Enrollment	1472	408	169
Student Demographics	Asian: 6% Black: 5% Hispanic: 8% White: 80%	Asian: 8% Black: 7% Hispanic: 11% White: 74%	Asian: 9% Black: 7% Hispanic: 12% White: 72%
English Language Learners	1%	3%	
Students with Special Needs	14%	16%	13.4%
Student Attendance	97%	96%	94%
Students Chronically Absent	3%	5%	
Admissions Methods	Zoned	Zoned	Zoned

Source: NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot, Comprehensive Educational Plan

While these results do not specifically show the breakdown of different minority groups in the earlier years, the new school appears to have absorbed these minority populations. Because the corner of the district that has been zoned for PS 118 is closer to a higher-minority neighborhood, the effect of splitting the school zones at that location could have resulted in shifting the minority populations out of the old zones. However, across each of the three new schools, the minority percentages remain fairly consistent.

Additionally, concerns about economic segregation and social class issues present in some of the discourse do not appear to have come to pass. One of the statistics the NYC Department of Education keeps on each of its schools is the economic needs index. This index

reflects the socioeconomic status of the school population and is calculated using the following formula: Economic Need Index = (Percent Temporary Housing) + (Percent HRA Eligible \times 0.5) + (Percent Free Lunch Eligible \times 0.5) (NYC Department of Education 2015). As shown in Table 5, the index did not change much after rezoning occurred.

TABLE 5: ECONOMIC NEEDS INDEX

	PS 321 William Penn	PS 39 Henry Bristow
2011-2012	7%	19%
2014-2015	9%	17%

NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot

While there is not an index score report available for PS 118 until next year, the percentage of free and reduced lunch students at the school is 6.1 percent (2015-16 Comprehensive Education Plan). This small percentage combined with minimal changes in index at PS 321 and PS 39, indicates minimal economic segregating issues are in effect in this rezoning measure.

While there may be some small segregating issues at play in this district, mainly this historically wealthy neighborhood is relatively homogenous by race (see Appendix E) and socioeconomic status across the zoning lines. Because there is not an emphasis on racial dynamics between conflicting neighborhood profiles, the emphasis in the rezoning debate appears to be on economic issues of property value. In a similar attempt to address overcrowding as the Dumbo/Brooklyn Heights schools, the CEC approved this rezoning measure to address the increasing demand to attend PS 321 from parents across the borough seeking to buy property in the area in order to gain access to the high-performing school. The popular school, which has long been the most coveted in the neighborhood, has drawn families to the area resulting in a

continued substantial pattern of rising real estate prices (Harris 2012, Albrecht Dec 2012). Because real estate prices are so closely linked to school performance, the concern of this rezoning for many parents took a more economic spin than a school performance angle as it did for PS 8 and PS 307. A little under half of the commenters addressed property values as an objection to the rezoning scheme. Some comments included:

“On a personal level, like many other families on this street, we saved and planned and decided to make an investment in order to follow the rules and live within a school zone we had chosen carefully.”

“Impact on property values for families whose largest investment is in their homes...think about the impact of this proposal on the larger Park Slope community beyond parents and students along. Many families...will lose \$75,000 to \$100,000 in property value (or more) overnight if this proposal goes through.”

“We who bought into the 321 zone paid a pretty penny for the privilege... Our block stands to be redistricted to PS 39, a school I would not have moved to Park Slope for. Another solution must be found, one that does not have deleterious effects on children’s lives, and on the real estate values of hardworking taxpaying city residents.”

These comments express how different the predominant theme to this rezoning debate is to the debate in CEC 13. Housing prices only came up in 5 percent of the Dumbo rezoning comments. Additionally, school quality, while a concern to some parents was only brought up 15 percent of the time in District 13.

In conjunction with the lack of integration issues, school performance in District 15 did not have as great of an achievement gap in test scores prior to rezoning as does PS 8 and PS 307. As Tables 6 and 7 show, while PS 321 performed between 5 and 10 percent better than PS 39 on their English and Math test scores, they were both well above city and state averages.

TABLE 6: SCHOOL TEST SCORE PERFORMANCE (2011-2012): PERCENTAGE THAT MET STATE STANDARDS

	PS 39	PS 321
English	62.1%	72.0%
Math	66.7%	77.1%

Source: NYC Department of Education School Progress Report

TABLE 7: SCHOOL TEST SCORE PERFORMANCE (2014-2015): PERCENTAGE THAT MET STATE STANDARDS

	PS 39 Henry Bristow	PS 321 William Penn	PS 118 Maurice Sendak
English	69%	75%	N/A
Math	75%	82%	N/A

Source: NYC Department of Education School Progress Report (2011-2012)

n.b. P.S. 118 test score report not available until 2016-2017 school year

While the precise PS 118 reports on test scores are not released until the next school year, the Department of Education's Quality Report Overview (2014-2015) describes PS 118 as an excellent school with top marks in its curriculum and teaching quality. This result indicates PS 118 has been built with the same community support and resources as PS 321.

By creating a new school they are defining a new school community to be filled with its own organizations focused on future school improvement. Because parental involvement contributes to educational well being (Caldas and Bankston 2015), building a framework of strong parental involvement is instrumental to school success. Because the PS 321 PTA was so strong before rezoning, the section of that school that broke off to PS 118 inherited some of that existing organization (as well as their fundraising capability) to the new school. One new PS 118 PTA member expressed their intention to replicate their experiences at PS 321 as closely as possible, stating:

“We want to have an equal reputation, an equal number of special subject offerings. We want to make sure they have art and gym and music. We want to make sure they get all the resources they would have had, had they gone to P.S. 321, but without the overcrowding.” – PS 118 PTA member (Albrecht Dec 2012)

This is an example of how parents in well-off school zones can maintain school quality after a zoning change by shoring up transferable political and economic resources.

Lack of a greater neighborhood shift without gentrification, combined with relatively stable levels of diversity in the schools has resulted in a very different case for how community identity is used in rezoning discourse. Parents in Park Slope describe their community as one with “great harmony and sense of community” and recognize the importance of the school in reinforcing that community identity, stating:

“Excluding children from this school will be damaging to our efforts to improve our community.”

“Including our block will mean the school can be woven into the fabric of the neighborhood more successfully (not simply know as the school built to accommodate 321 overflow).”

“As a child, I grew up on the same street as my elementary school, and I know what an amazing advantage that was for me, in terms of my safety, my socialization, and my overall experience.”

Without the racial dynamics and threat of gentrification, the community discourse finds fewer places to identify the threat of an outsider, only looking at abstract economic threats. The social boundaries that separate the ‘us’ from ‘them’ are more difficult to distinguish. While the mapping of new school boundaries brings people together to express opinions on the zoning changes, the discourse indicates an awareness that the boundaries between people in these districts is not beyond negotiation.

Conclusion

This research began with an exploration of the divergence in community discourse during school rezoning debates, which led to the question: how does the racial composition of school districts shape discourse? Here, I utilized these two Brooklyn elementary school rezoning cases to illustrate how in both of these districts, a discursive practice serves to establish a connection and common political agenda among certain groups of people. Discourse in both cases contains the term ‘community’ used in a way to shore up each side’s arguments, as a site of identification and political expression, as well as initiate insider/outsider dynamic. In one case, community discourse is used more as an inclusion/exclusion tool through antagonistic discourse, and in the other discourse is used to call attention to the economic and social importance of the neighborhood school.

School-based inequalities between neighborhoods have strong impacts on the communities. The deep ties to neighborhood schools, particularly elementary schools such as the ones shown here, show how essential schools are to community identity and boundary formation. Overall, the community discourse shown here in these rezoning maneuvers suggests that racial instability and changing neighborhoods are a big concern to neighborhood schools. The discourse here largely points to a broader pattern of community identity and pride in the neighborhood school as an essential component to educational success and community well being. Without an attachment to the social structure of its surrounding community, the school will lack the support it needs to thrive. Perhaps the latent concerns about racial integration will be eased once schools begin to grow and meld old identities, or there may be continued challenges if the instability of gentrification continues providing a sense of outsider threat.

By utilizing cases of school rezoning to explore how different groups perceive threat to their community through the reorganization of school boundaries, my research suggests new areas to develop community threat literature in sociology. Rezoning provides interesting cases where lines are drawn on a map to specifically delineate who is an insider and who is an outsider in an educational community. By proposing changes to the map, school districts are proposing changes to the community. How groups respond to that threat of change can reveal interesting community identities framed by racial and economic dynamics beyond the issue of school zoning.

Further studies of the direct effect of community identity on the future of school quality post-rezoning could illustrate how the communities shift and repair after rezoning breaks their original zone-based identity apart. Because the empirical data I used to map discourse was limited to the time frame of the rezoning debate, I was not able to follow parent and community commentary after the rezoning occurred to see how discourse changed once the school zones changed. Once mutual exclusion was no longer an option, it would be interesting to follow up on if and how previously antagonistic discursive patterns changed in the Dumbo schools.

Additionally, because my data only encompassed a fraction of the perspective of parents in these districts, further studies could follow rezoning cases as they happen in order to have discussions with larger numbers of parents and community members in the process of rezoning. It would have been helpful to get interview or more extensive data from parents and council members to gain greater insight into the reasoning behind their opinions and potentially interview parents not a part of the active discourse at meetings. While the limitations of my data to these two district zoning cases and only a part of the wider parental response results in the potential for a skewed and more controversial image of the rezoning debate than may have

actually occurred, the totality of the discourse examined here points to an interesting impact of gentrification and racial disparities.

In order to further develop representation of the perspective of minorities, as new rezoning cases begin, in further research should identify and follow a rezoning proposal involving multiple minority-majority schools integrating zones. While I was not able to study such cases, with more time and greater access to records, I believe it would be highly beneficial in developing an understanding on how community racial histories and gentrification affects rezoning debates for these schools. This addition is particularly important as much of the previous literature in sociology on community and racial threat is devoted to the perspective of white communities.

Even while residential segregation has declined, intense racial isolation in schools, particularly among African-Americans, has persisted in New York City. As neighborhoods continue to change and increasing gentrification shifts population patterns, public schools have to change to meet their community's new needs. However, with this level of segregation, it comes as little surprise that when attempts to combine distinctive schools and communities occur, it is often controversial. The rezoning plans, common attempts to ameliorate unbalanced school population patterns, have immense effects on both their students and their larger communities. By examining trends in discourse from two these Brooklyn school districts, I have found that neighborhood racial history and the economic impact of schools on communities greatly influences how these commenters view the rezoning proposals. My findings help demonstrate the strength of the relationship between these communities and their neighborhood schools. They also reveal surprising ways racial discourse operates outside of current sociological theories on community threat, with a contentious section of the threat discourse

coming from minorities. Developing research on these perspectives and gaining a greater understanding of how communities develop discourse on rezoning may ultimately be helpful in addressing the racial and educational disparities persistent in New York City neighborhoods.

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY PRE-REZONING

	CEC 13 (2014-2015)		CEC 15 (2011-2012)	
	PS 307 Daniel Hale Williams	PS 307 Daniel Hale Williams	PS 321 William Penn	PS 39 Henry Bristow
Grades Served	PK,0K,01,02,03,04,05,SE	PK,0K,01,02,03,04,05,SE	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, SE	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, PK, SE
Enrollment	413	413	1436	344
Student Demographics	Asian: 3% Black: 60% Hispanic: 28% White: 7% American Indian: 1%	Asian: 3% Black: 60% Hispanic: 28% White: 7% American Indian: 1%	18.6% Black/Hispanic	28.2% Black/Hispanic
English Language Learners	3%	3%	1.3%	4.4%
Students with Special Needs	34%	34%	12.7%	18.3%

Source: NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot, NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot, Comprehensive Educational Plan

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY POST-REZONING

	CEC 15 (2014-2015)		
	PS 321 William Penn	PS 39 Henry Bristow	PS 118 Maurice Sendak Community School
Grades Served	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, PK, SE	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 0K, SE	Pre-k, K, 01, 02
Enrollment	1472	408	169
Student Demographics	Asian: 6% Black: 5% Hispanic: 8% White: 80%	Asian: 8% Black: 7% Hispanic: 11% White: 74%	Asian: 9% Black: 7% Hispanic: 12% White: 72%
English Language Learners	1%	3%	
Students with Special Needs	14%	16%	13.4%

Source: NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot, NYC Department of Education School Quality Snapshot, Comprehensive Educational Plan

APPENDIX C: CODING

Theme	Words/Phrases	Number of Comments	Percentage of Comments	Number of Comments	Percentage of Comments
		<i>CEC 13 – Dumbo</i>		<i>CEC 15 – Park Slope</i>	
Insider/Outsider	us, we/they, our/their, my, them, those, exclude	31	66%	25	48%
School Quality	test scores, school scores, ratings, school crowding	13	28%	8	15%
Race/Diversity	minority, black, Hispanic, integration, segregation, diversity, color, white, Asian	16	34%	8	15%
SES	free lunch, well-off, class, elite	4	9%	6	12%
Community	"Farragut"/Dumbo, neighborhood, community, PTA	25	53%	20	38%
Economy	Housing prices, property value, "damage interests"	2	4%	25	48%
General Inquiry		0	0%	4	8%
Total		47		52	

APPENDIX D: RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS 2000/2010

Neighborhood Area	2010 Population	Change from 2000	% Chg from 2000
DUMBO-VingrHl-DwntnBrkl-BoermHl	34,495	3,646	11.80%
Park Slope - Gowanus	67,649	386	0.60%

Neighborhood Area	2010 Population	Change from 2000	% Chg from 2000	% Black in 2010	% Black in 2000
DUMBO-VingrHl-DwntnBrkl-BoermHl	7,883	-1,841	-18.90%	22.90%	31.50%
Park Slope - Gowanus	4,334	-1,974	-31.30%	6.40%	9.40%

Neighborhood Area	2010 Population	Change from 2000	% Chg from 2000	% White in 2010	% White in 2000
DUMBO-VingrHl-DwntnBrkl-BoermHl	14,560	5,182	55.30%	42.20%	30.40%
Park Slope - Gowanus	45,529	7,361	19.30%	67.30%	56.70%

Neighborhood Area	2010 Population	Change from 2000	% Chg from 2000	% Asian in 2010	% Asian in 2000
DUMBO-VingrHl-DwntnBrkl-BoermHl	2,949	1,489	101.90%	8.50%	4.70%
Park Slope - Gowanus	4,056	514	14.50%	6%	5.30%

Neighborhood Area	2010 Population	Change from 2000	% Chg from 2000	% Hispanic in 2010	% Hispanic in 2000
DUMBO-VingrHl-DwntnBrkl-BoermHl	7,981	-1,050	-11.60%	23.10%	29.30%
Park Slope - Gowanus	11,263	-5,405	-32.40%	16.60%	24.80%

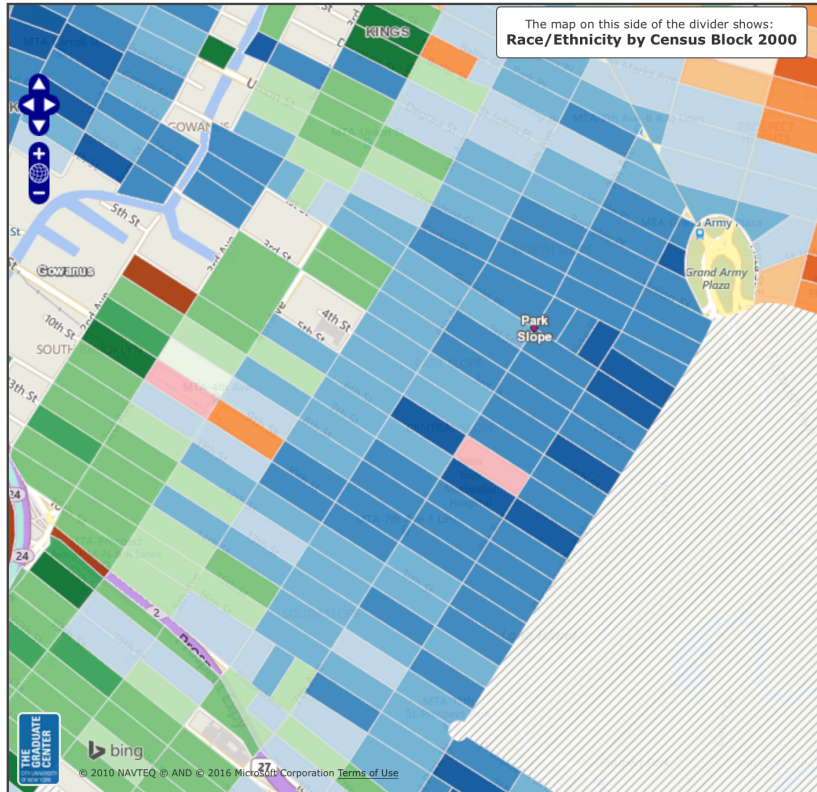
Neighborhood Area	2010 Population	Change from 2000	% Chg from 2000	% "other" in 2010	% "other" in
DUMBO-VingrHl- DwntnBrkl-BoermHl	1,122	-132	-10.50%	3.30%	4.10%
Park Slope - Gowanus	2,467	-110	-4.30%	3.60%	3.80%

Source: Center for Urban Research, The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)
<http://www.urbanresearchmaps.org/plurality/#nabes>

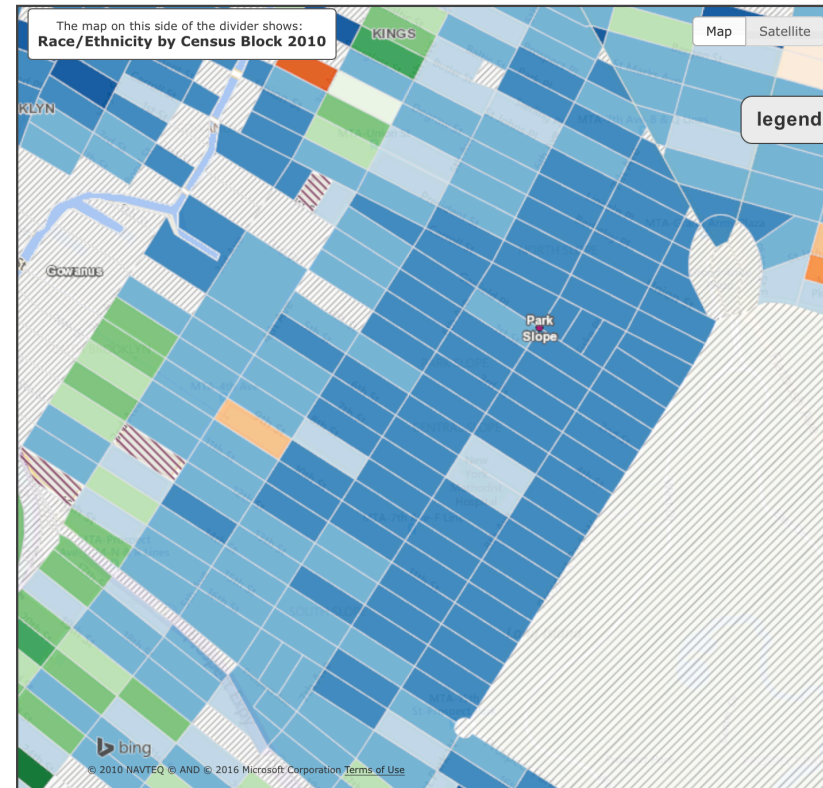
APPENDIX E: RACE/ETHNICITY BY CENSUS BLOCK 2000/2010

Park Slope:

Race/Ethnicity by Census Block (2000)

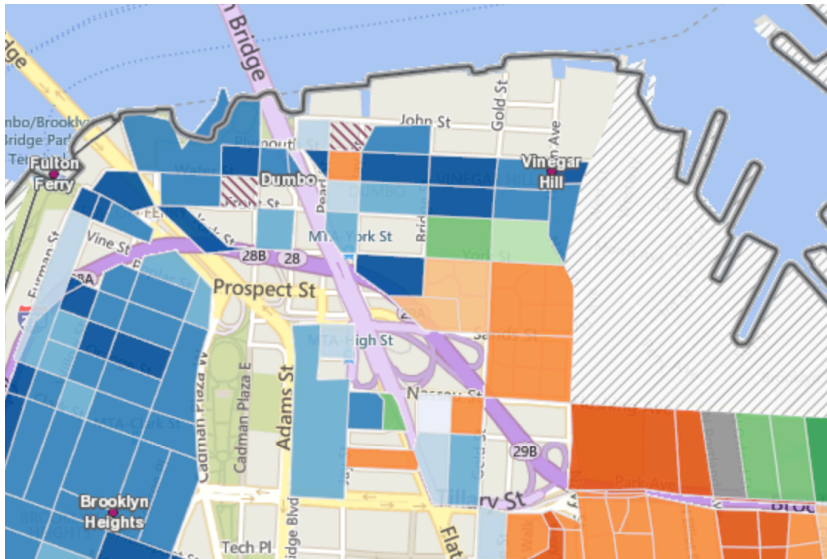


Race/Ethnicity by Census Block (2010)

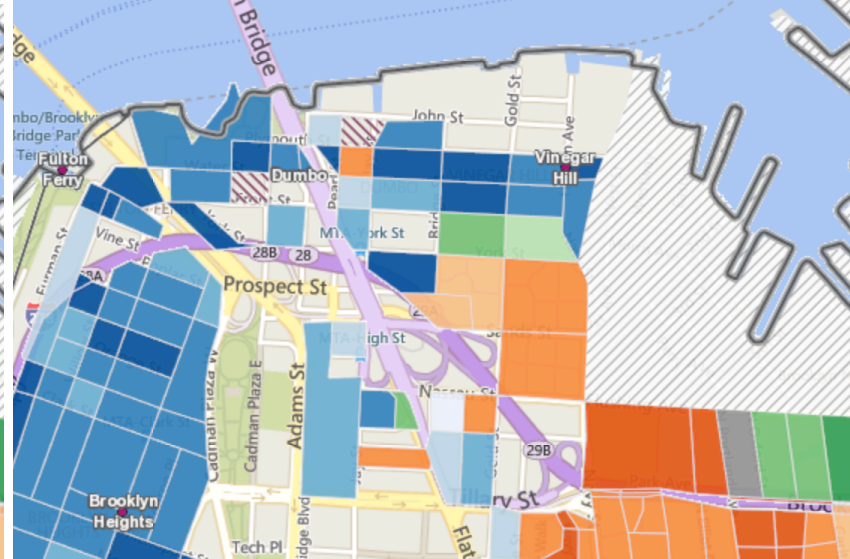


Source: <http://www.urbanresearchmaps.org/comparator/pluralitymap.htm>

Dumbo:
Race/Ethnicity by Census Block (2000)

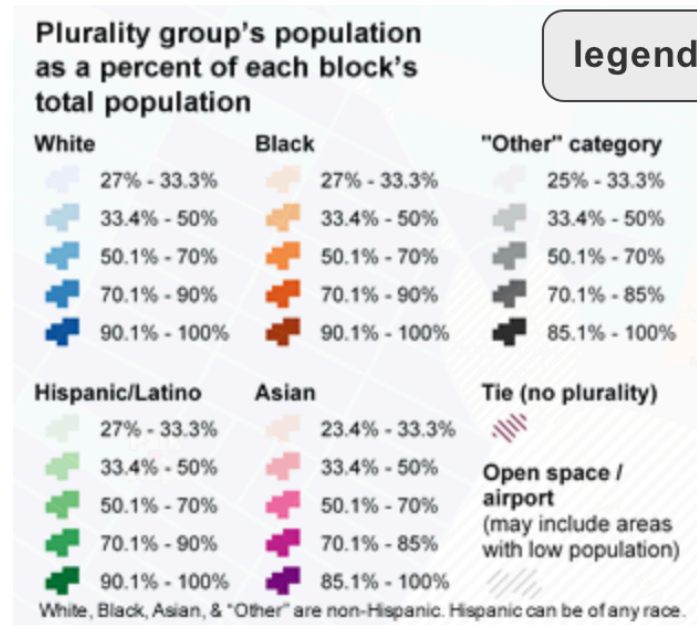


Race/Ethnicity by Census Block (2010)



Source: <http://www.urbanresearchmaps.org/comparator/pluralitymap.htm>

Legend:



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